



WALKING MEDITATION

instructions by Jack Kornfield, *A Path With Heart*

Select a quiet place where you can walk comfortably back and forth, indoors or out, about ten to thirty paces in length. Begin by standing at one end of this “walking path,” with your feet firmly planted on the ground. Let your hands rest easily, wherever they are comfortable. Close your eyes for a moment, center yourself, and feel your body standing on earth. Feel the pressure on the bottoms of your feet and the other natural sensations of standing. Then open your eyes and let yourself be present and alert.

Begin to walk slowly. Let yourself walk with a sense of ease and dignity. Pay attention to your body. With each step, feel the sensations of lifting your foot and leg off the earth. Be aware as you place each foot on the earth. Relax and let your walking be easy and natural. Feel each step mindfully as you walk. When you reach the end of your path, pause for a moment. Center yourself, carefully turn around, pause again so that you can be aware of the first step as you walk back. You can experiment with the speed, walking at whatever pace keeps you most present.

Continue to walk back and forth for ten or twenty minutes longer. As with the breath in sitting, your mind will wander away many, many times. As soon as you notice this, acknowledge where you have been and then come back to being alive here and now with the next step you take.

After some practice with walking meditation, you will learn to use it to calm and collect yourself and to live more wakefully in your body. You can then extend your walking practice in an informal way when you go shopping, whenever you walk down the street or walk to or from your car. You can learn to enjoy walking for its own sake instead of the usual planning and thinking and in this simple way, begin to be truly present, to bring your body, heart, and mind together as you move through your life.

Additional note from Tim:

I find it very helpful to really pause at each end of my walking path. Really stop. Feel the body, feel the breath, gaze ahead. Stay still for a few breaths. And then turn around and continue. This helps me settle more deeply into walking meditation practice and helps prevent it from taking on an automatic quality.

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